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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a workshop designed to: determine the preconceptions about diversity issues held by predominantly white faculty at a small, NCATE-accredited Pennsylvania university; increase faculty members' awareness of diversity and multiculturalism; ascertain what the faculty would need to include diversity issues in their classes; and provide information regarding diversity issues to encourage faculty to incorporate such content into their classes. Through a luncheon workshop, eight volunteer faculty members discussed, questioned, and synthesized their understandings of multicultural education and diversity within education. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were used to determine changes in their beliefs and understandings following a short video, readings from a current booklet on multicultural education, and discussion. Before the workshop, none of the participants defined multicultural education in terms of pedagogy, knowledge construction, or student empowerment. However, they were broader in their definitions of diversity. All of them claimed to address multiculturalism and diversity in their classes. Following the workshop, their definitions changed. Responses became less definite, and many reconsidered their initial views. They appeared to have a greater awareness of the issues and willingness to re-explore their knowledge, assumptions, and practices. The questionnaires are appended. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

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A Dialogue in Diversity: Taking the First Steps

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Abstract

Education programs need to instruct preservice teachers regarding diversity issues. To this end, university education faculty must understand the implications of multicultural education and reflect on their own beliefs and abilities, and current classroom models. This workshop focused on the education faculty's understandings of diversity and influences upon these understandings.

The student body and faculty of a small, public, NCATE-accredited university in Pennsylvania were almost entirely White. The community surrounding the university was also homogenous, being rural and White. In such a setting, preservice teachers were not exposed to a great deal of diversity within their classes. Instead, the exposure to diversity and issues of multiculturalism rested on the shoulders of the teaching faculty.

Our goals in this workshop were threefold. First, to determine the preconceptions and beliefs that the faculty already held. Because of the real-life importance of this issue, we wanted to explore whether multicultural education was important to the faculty, whether the faculty could define the concept multicultural education, and whether they applied any tenets of the concept in their classes. Second, we wanted to increase the faculty's awareness regarding the issue of diversity and multiculturalism. Third, we wanted to ascertain what the faculty would need (e.g., resources, time, models) to include diversity issues in their classes. Additionally, we wanted to provide some information regarding the issue of diversity in hopes that faculty would consider incorporating content about diversity in their classes. This workshop was the first step in changing attitudes to promote the teaching of diversity.

Through a luncheon workshop, volunteer faculty discussed, questioned, and synthesized their understandings of multicultural education and diversity within education. Pre- and post-questionnaires (Appendix A and B) were used to determine the changes in beliefs and understandings following a short video, readings from a current booklet on multicultural education, and discussion.

Literature Review

Multicultural education is a broad concept that centers around the issues of diversity and equity. It includes five dimensions: "content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure" (Banks, 1993, p. 25). It includes not only ethnic and racial differences, but also gender and socioeconomic differences. Multicultural education is necessary, according to Banks, to promote more equitable education. As he explains, "An important goal of multicultural education is to improve race relations and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross-cultural and in personal, social, and civic action that will help make our nation more democratic and just" (p. ix-x). For the goals of multicultural education to be achieved, teachers must fully comprehend and actively pursue them in the classroom.

According to Howard (1999), most education professors are white, most of their students are white, and most of the current schoolteachers are white. In contrast, the population of students of color is rising: They made up 30% of the population in 1990, 34% in 1994, and will reach 40% or more by 2010 (Howard, 1999, p.2). He asserts, "Seldom have we helped white educators look deeply and critically at the necessary

changes and growth we ourselves must achieve if we are to work effectively with the real issues of diversity (Howard, 1999, p. 3). Many educators, both in K-12 and higher education, have never reflected on the privileges automatically obtained by being white (Howard, 1999). This point is driven home by Merryfield (2000), who asks, "How can teacher educators who have never examined their own privilege or who have no personalized learning of what it feels like to live as the Other prepare K-12 teaches to teach for diversity, equity, and interconnectedness?" (p. 441). She and Howard recommend engagement and dialogue about diversity in education, declaring that transformation and change will occur as part of the process.

Gay (1997) opined that teachers need to be exposed to cultural diversity in their professional preparation program and that this exposure needs to be frequent, purposeful, and infused throughout their training. The current lack of equal achievement for children of color may be due to the barriers between the home culture perspectives of the children and the school culture. Gay (1997) stated,

> When students have to cross one or more cultural boundaries before they can begin to attend to learning tasks, great social, psychological, and academic consequences may be incurred. Thus, developing effective skills for teaching in ethnically diverse and culturally pluralistic classrooms requires that teachers understand the interactions among culture, ethnicity, socialization, teaching, and learning (p. 155-156).

Therefore, the inclusion of multicultural education into teacher education programs becomes necessary for the opportunity for equal achievement of all children.

According to Wahlstom and Clarken (1992), infusion is the best way to educate prospective teachers about multicultural education. To infuse multicultural education, teacher educators weave it throughout the curriculum and pedagogy instead of teaching it as a separate class. In addition, Wahlstom and Clarken (1992) suggest that education faculty improve their own cultural awareness and sensitivity through professional development experiences. The education faculty then can model strategies appropriate for diverse settings. "Faculty must first recognize cultural differences, acknowledge those differences, and then value those differences" (Wahlstom and Clarken, 1992, p. 10). To reach this goal of multicultural education infusion, they recommended that multicultural education needs to be an on-going topic of discussion in faculty meetings.

Looking at the issue of diversity in higher education from a broader perspective, Obiakor (1994) recommends five steps for universities to infuse multicultural education into their curriculum. First, universities needs to use diverse assessment modes for recruitment, retention and graduation of students. He claims that universities should not rely solely on standardized tests because they are unreliable predictors of student success. Second, universities need to recruit qualified minority students and discard the "quota mentality." Third, professors need to use culturally sensitive instruction, including, "verbal interaction, divergent thinking, use of dialect, presenting real-world tasks, including a people focus, cooperative learning, peer/cross-age grouping, and peer tutoring" (p. 5). Fourth, local communities should be involved and the input of all community groups should be recognized. Fifth, universities need to shift their paradigms from within the university community. As Obiakor notes, the infusion of multicultural education cannot be imposed upon faculty; the faculty need to take responsibility.

Based on the research by Hassler (1998), Obiakor's recommendations may be difficult to enact in small private collages. She explains that infusing multicultural education often does not occur because of the colleges' "homogenous student populations, small faculty size, and lack of access to diverse urban schools due to geographical location" (p. 2). Recognizing that new teachers will inevitably work with diverse populations, Hassler investigated faculty-identified deterrents to infusing multicultural education in such colleges. She found that department chairs believed that "lack of minority faculty, lack of time for current faculty to gain expertise, lack of funding, and lack of minority students'" were the top four deterrents (p.18). The faculty also identified a lack of time, a lack of minority students, and a lack of minority faculty as the most significant deterrents to infusion of multicultural education. Another deterrent, although not identified directly by the faculty, was that infusing multicultural education was a low priority for both faculty and department chairs. Thus, the infusion of multicultural education into that education program was unlikely.

Methods

This study represents the first step in shifting the paradigm regarding multicultural education and diversity at a small public university set in a rural community. Following Wahlstom and Clarken's (1992) recommendations, we decided to begin a voluntary faculty dialogue on diversity. We held a short luncheon workshop in which fellow faculty members could participate without feeling threatened, inferior, or ignorant regarding the issue of diversity in our teacher education program.

Wanting to get the greatest faculty participation possible, notices were sent a month in advance to each faculty member asking them to save the date. One week prior

to the workshop, flyers were distributed in faculty mailboxes. Three days prior to the workshop, email reminders were sent to all education faculty via a listserv. Personal contacts were also made to encourage participation. Despite all of the advanced communications, only 8 of the 38 faculty members attended.

Attached to the flyers were pre-questionnaires (Appendix A) asking participants for their perspectives on multicultural education and diversity as well as for demographic information. Participants were encouraged to put their month and date of their birthdays as the only identifier for pre- and post- comparison. These questionnaires were collected prior to the beginning of the workshop to prevent the data from being biased. On the day of the luncheon, participants were greeted with a table filled with international foods. Each food item was labeled regarding content and geographic origin. Examples of food choices included: Mediterranean Salad, Caribbean Black Beans and Rice, and Mexican Wedding Cookies.

The leaders welcomed the participants, explaining that the purpose of the discussion was to gain an understanding of everybody's perspectives in order to create a department-wide common vision concerning multicultural education and diversity. The participants were asked focus questions about a portion of an Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) video that was then shown. The questions, which centered on curriculum and instruction, were briefly discussed after the video.

The video, *Multicultural Education,* presented two school systems that restructured their programs to be more multicultural. The sections of the video shown included a roundtable discussion by English teachers regarding the inclusion of

multicultural literature (regarding both subject and author), a math teacher showing how she uses students' diversity to enrich the classroom climate, an exercise on stereotyping in a high school classroom, and a simulation in which English-speaking teachers were taught in another language. The video clearly communicated that teachers need to recognize the diverse composition of students and to implement techniques that respect this diversity.

The participants were then divided into three groups and asked to read specific sections from *Diversity within Unity* (2001). This 24-page booklet provides information and direction dealing with the issue of diversity. Twelve "essential principles" are covered within five subject areas: teacher learning, student learning, intergroup relations, school governance, organization and equity, and assessment. After reading their section, each group created a graphic representation on poster paper, explaining the major concepts and ideas found in their section of reading. After a short period of time, these posters were shared with the whole group. A short discussion based on these posters ensued as comments, questions, and experiences were shared.

At the end of the two-hour workshop, participants were asked to complete post-questionnaires (Appendix B). The first five questions were identical to the pre-questionnaire, allowing for pre-and post- workshop comparisons. The remaining questions on the second questionnaire focused on the participants' reactions to the discussion, materials, and overall workshop.

After receiving all post-questionnaires, the data were analyzed using qualitative methods. First, individuals' answers from pre- and post-questionnaires were compared to ascertain the changes that occurred. Second, answers from both questionnaires were

analyzed for patterns. Third, the posters and discussion notes were analyzed. In this way, the data were triangulated as much as possible in order to discern participants' beliefs.

Findings

The eight participants involved in this study were self-selected, volunteering to participate. Therefore, this study does not represent the entire faculty. The small number of participants may be significant, as later discussed in this paper. Prior to the workshop, each participant provided demographic information (see Appendix C). All eight participants were white and seven were female. Seven of the eight had at least 14 years teaching experience. All had taught in K-12 settings as well as in higher education. The majority of the participants had spent a great portion of their teaching careers in rural areas.

Defining multicultural education. Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to define multicultural education on a pre-questionnaire. Most responses defined multicultural education as content or as something to be taught. No one expressed it in terms of pedagogy, knowledge construction, or empowerment of students. One response explained that multicultural education was "the available and requirement of *materials* for students to become aware of history, accomplishments, and related-ness to all cultures in our global society" (italics added). Another participant responded, "Learning, which includes information and experiences, which celebrate differences and different similarities among cultures of learners, as well as cultures that the learner is not a member of." This echoes Banks' (1989) Contribution Approach (Level 1) to multicultural education, which "focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural

elements" (p.189). It is the lowest level of incorporating multiculturalism into a classroom. This same participant added that culture is "not always defined by race" implying that culture is *often* defined by race. Two participants provided similar responses, noting that respect, understanding, and appreciation of all students were the ideas underlying multicultural education.

Participants' also provided definitions of diversity in education. Interestingly, they were broader than the definitions for multicultural education. "We need to address all needs," "learning in different modes, approaches, content," and "all the multiple ways of being and knowing" were some of the responses. One participant wrote, "Diversity is anything that deviates from the 'majority.' Diversity is difference." Another participant defined diversity in education as "opportunities are available to all regardless of sex, age, race, religion, national origin."

Following the workshop, the participants' definitions of multicultural education and diversity in education changed. First, the responses were less definite. One participant, who defined multicultural education as "Awareness of various populations and cultures" on the pre-questionnaire, wrote "No longer sure" on the post-questionnaire. Another participant noted, "I know there are many different acceptable definitions [of multicultural education]. I see the need for some common ground." Second, the responses no longer focused only content and materials. Instead, they focused on equity and attitudes. One participant defined multicultural education as "Education that is inclusive to all regardless of race, religion, gender," while another described it as "Developing knowledge, positive attitudes, and positive feelings toward diverse cultures of individuals." One participant, who initially declared the necessity of

treating every student equally, wrote on her post-questionnaire that diversity in education meant "treating everyone differently." The participants appeared to reconsider their views, indicating some impact by the workshop.

Infusing multiculturalism into the courses. On the initial questionnaire, participants were asked whether and how their syllabi addressed multiculturalism and diversity in their classes. Every participant responded in the affirmative. Examples provided included "reading two chapters on it [multicultural education]," doing "a lot with multiple intelligences and cultural pluralism," and "exploring diversity in terms of issues presented in literature." One participant responded,

> Language and literacy development are embedded in culture. Cultural influences on literacy learning must be considered and accommodated in the curriculum. Example, ESL students and literacy instruction that accommodates their first language/culture and English language learning together- not one versus the other.

Another participant reflected that diversity/multiculturalism was addressed, "although perhaps in a subtle way," by all students being treated with honesty and respect. Although participants all believed that their syllabi addressed the issues of multicultural education and diversity, the range and depth of this attention was varied.

Participants were also asked whether and how they, as professors, addressed multiculturalism and diversity in the classes they teach. Again, all respondents affirmed their consideration to these issues. Many claimed that materials used in class supported multicultural education and diversity issues. The literature, materials, and projects were examples provided. One wrote that the focus on multiculturalism/diversity "goes across

the curriculum. I also address diversity in learning styles." Another wrote that the issues were addressed by "serving people with special needs using technology in schools/clinical settings." Only one participant inferred that multiculturalism and diversity were not being infused as much as possible. The participant wrote that it was being addressed, "but only in terms of cases, examples, and multicultural literature. Even this is limited in the department." Again, all participants initially confirmed their own personal contributions in class regarding these issues.

After the workshop, participants' answers changed considerably. The participants were asked if they envisioned changing their syllabi and how they personally addressed multicultural education and diversity based on the workshop. Only one indicated acceptance of a current syllabus, writing, "I do a lot already in multicultural." Others were less sure, responding, "Quite possibly" and "I'm not sure at this time." One participant, who initially indicated that he or she did a lot in class regarding multicultural education, indicated an intention of changing the syllabus to "try to integrate additional activities throughout the semester." Similarly, a participant who earlier wrote about addressing multiculturalism through literature, responded, "I need to do more to heighten sensitivity and awareness of other cultures." Another indicated a desire to make "the context and focus of projects to be more multicultural." Only one participant indicated that time constraints prevented changes to the syllabus.

Initially, the responses intimated that the participants were content and solid in their understanding and application of multicultural and diversity issues. The change in answers, however, between the two questionnaires indicates a greater awareness

about the issues and a willingness to re-explore their own knowledge, assumptions, and practices.

Where to go next. On the questionnaires and during the workshop itself, participants generated answers to questions of how to proceed and what needs to be done to support the infusion of multicultural education into our curriculum. Three patterns emerged from all three venues: (1) more diversity is needed on campus; (2) stakeholders need more time to discuss and investigate the issue; and (3) professors need more access to resources.

At present, the population in the College of Education is very homogenous and the surrounding public schools mirror this homogeneity. In response to this, participants called for "more opportunities for interaction among cultures." Suggestions included requiring an urban field experience and asking foreign students from other colleges within the university to speak to the education students regarding their experiences and cultures. The participants also recommended improved recruiting efforts, including hiring more diverse faculty and providing scholarships to ensure a diverse student body. One participant added, "I would not be in favor of lowering standards to allow for a more diverse population, favoring some over others." Another participant recognized the need to "develop a setting more inviting to diverse populations."

Another issue centered on participants' need for additional time. Consistent with Hassler's (1998) findings, this appeared to be a great restraint on implementing more multicultural education into the curriculum. "More time to talk and reflect" as individuals, groups, and as a department were desired. Furthermore, it was obvious that the participants were willing to make time to pursue the issue of multicultural education: Not

only did they give up one-and-a-half hours for the first workshop, but the changes they desired focused on longer, additional workshops. This showed the commitment of these faculty members towards multicultural education and their desire to learn more.

The third concern was a need for additional and accessible resources. As one participant summarized, "Basically we are in agreement of needs and constraints. Seems to be similar goals for all, but some lack of education, resources, and time to accomplish them." When asked what types of resources were desired, some participants admitted to not knowing what was available. Others expressed a desire for models for infusing multicultural education. A participant suggested cross-curricular integration between the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. Two participants discussed co-teaching courses to provide a more multicultural and diverse picture. The most common response, however, was the opportunity to talk to others – including faculty, students, teachers – from diverse backgrounds in order to gain a greater sense of what is needed.

Conclusions

Faculty responses in this study called attention to the importance of dialoguing about diversity and multicultural education. Without discussion, no vision for infusion could be created. Preservice teachers received a great deal of information about diversity and multiculturalism in some classes and none in others, possibly sending mixed messages concerning the overall importance of these concepts in education. Furthermore, prior to this discussion, some faculty members believed that they were alone in their desire to broaden students' cultural horizons. Others, needing assistance in locating resources or models, had no sense of whom to ask. After the workshop,

some faculty members worked with partners in order to modify their individual syllabi to complement other classes in forming a strong foundation of diversity within their subject areas (e.g., Children's Literature class and Teaching Reading to Elementary Students). Almost all participants requested further workshops in order to pursue this important subject. Based on suggestions and comments from the participants, we distributed *Diversity within Unity* booklets to all faculty members in the education department, hoping that they would join in future discussions. We also purchased additional resources regarding models and ideas in response to participants' expressed needs.

Recommendations for Further Research

While NCATE has infused diversity in its standards since 1978, it is apparent that the university under study was slow to enact more than the very minimum. One issue for further research would be to find out to what extent other NCATE accredited education programs have infused diversity and multiculturalism into their curriculums and the causes for the lack of implementation. Another related issue would be investigating the amount of background knowledge education faculty have regarding these concepts and what means of providing additional training, workshop, and resources have the greatest effect.

It would also be beneficial to follow a workshop like ours over the course of a few years to determine not only what changes faculty make in their classes, but also to determine if the preservice teachers gain a greater cultural understanding. Changes in preservice teacher knowledge is necessary because the education of this generation of American school children needs preservice teachers who are prepared to appreciate the increasingly diverse population in our schools and in our society. University faculty

members are the people responsible for that preparation – and therefore we need to prepare ourselves first.

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE A

This questionnaire will only take a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. Please fill it out in order without doubling back. There are no "right" answers nor any answers we are "looking for." Instead, this questionnaire will help us understand what our collective image of diversity is, how we arrived there, and see what changes occur (if any) after dialoguing with our colleagues.

From your own personal perspective:

1. How would you define multicultural education?

2. How would you define diversity in education?

3. Does your syllabus address diversity or multicultural education? Why? If yes, How?

4. Do you address diversity in the classes you teach? Why? If yes, How?

5. What do you think we, as a college, can do better (if anything) to attract a more diverse student population to our college?

Please Answer the Questions on the Back Also

1. How many years have you taught:
K-12 _____ Higher Education ____

2. What type of areas were the schools in which you taught? (If combination, write the number of years in each area)
____ Rural ____ Suburban ____ Urban

3. Which demographic group do you fall into?
____ White, non-Latino ____ Native American ____ Asian
____ Latino ____ African-America ____ Bi- or Multi-Racial

4a. Think of your closest friends. How many are there? _____

b. Of these specific friends, how many fall into the following categories? (Check as many as applicable)
____ White, non-Latino ____ Native American ____ Asian-American
____ Latino-American ____ African-America ____ Bi- or Multi-Racial
____ Born in the USA ____ Born outside of US, lives here now
____Catholic ____ Protestant Christian (may add sect(s): _____)
____ Jewish ____ Muslim ____ Atheist/Agnostic
____ Other Religion ____ Heterosexual ____ Homosexual
____ Physically challenged ____ psychological disorder

5. For cross-comparison without names, please put your 4 digit birthday (dd/mm). _____

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE B

This questionnaire will only take a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. Please fill it out in order without doubling back. There are no "right" answers nor any answers we are "looking for." Instead, this questionnaire will help us understand what our collective image of diversity is, how we arrived there, and see what changes occur (if any) after dialoguing with our colleagues.
From your personal perspective:

1. How would you define multicultural education?

2. How would you define diversity in education?

3. Do you envision yourself changing your syllabus for next semester (or amending it for this semester) based on anything said today? If yes, how?

4. Do you envision yourself changing addressing diversity in the classes you teach? for next semester (or amending it for this semester) based on anything said today? If yes, how?

5. What do you think we, as a college, can do better (if anything) to attract a more diverse student population to our college?

6. What ideas, statements, or questions that you heard today are striking to you?

7. How would you summarize what you heard your colleagues say today?

8. What was beneficial about this workshop?

9. What changes would you suggest to this workshop?

For cross-comparison without names, please put your 4 digit birthday (dd/mm). _____

Appendix C

Table 1: Demographic Information about Teaching Experience

Years of teaching in *K-12 schools*	*Years of teaching in Higher Education*	Total # years teaching	Teaching in Urban setting	Teaching in Suburban setting	Teaching in Rural setting
8	22	30	0	7	1
24	1	25			25
16	15	33	1	1	29
15	5	20			20
6	9	15	X	X	X
5	2	7			7
25	2	27		X	X
6	8	14	5		9

Note. One questionnaire did not have answers to these questions. Some participants put X instead of numbers; thus, the exact data is not available.

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